PEAKS OF SHALA

000 The hooded priest lighted us with his torch up a flight of worn stone stairs and into a low, beamed room on the second floor of the bishop's house. There the bishop, rising from a wooden bench, welcomed us in Albanian and Latin. He wore a rough, homespun woolen robe; his bare feet were in wooden sandals; a rosary of wooden beads hung on his chest. He was perhaps fifty, rotund, jovial, dignified. Perolli bent one knee and kissed the episcopal hand; little Mohammedan Rexh, in his red fez, gravely saluted; Cheremi, the ragged gendarme, put his rifle in a corner and knelt for the bishop's blessing.

We sat, Alex, Frances, and I, in a row on a wooden bench in the chilly bare room. A servant came in, barearmed, barelegged, clad in one piece of brown cloth that reached his knees, and the bishop gave orders; the servant returned with a hammered copper tray holding an earthen
[273] cup and a wooden bottle of rakejia. Now rakejia is a cousin to vodka and one of the strongest drinks that ever turned the imbiber's blood to liquid fire. We girls had debated about it; what should we do when courtesy required us to drink it? We had decided that Perolli should explain that we came from America and that in our tribe it was forbidden to drink intoxicants. But after sixteen hours of travel in the Albanian mountains we did not hesitate. One by one we took the cup that the servant filled, and drained it dry. From that time onward we drank the stuff like water, and it had no visible effect upon us,

576 slightest revelation of his surprise the host
272 changed his gesture.

"Beauty and good to you," said I, in Albanian, prompted by Perolli, and when I had drunk the thimbleful, "Good trails!" said I, handing back the cup. For this is the manner in which one
273 drinks coffee. Do not make the mistake, when
576 next you are in the Albanian mountains, of saying the same things when you are offered rakejia. For rakejia there is a quite different form of courtesies. And as soon as the coffee cup, rinsed and refilled with freshly made coffee, has been given to each guest in turn, you will be offered rakejia.

Alex and Frances and I looked at one another, but we drained the large goblet of colorless liquid fire in turn, without a word of protest. It might have been the water that it looked like, so far as it affected our minds or tongues, for I continue to ascribe to the fire warmth and the blessed sensation of resting after those trails the sense of contentment that filled us all.

000 "Strange," I said, for I still dimly remembered another way of life, as though, perhaps, I had sometime dreamed it, "chimneys that don't draw make so much smoke in a room, yet here there is no chimney and a large fire, and we don't notice the smoke." And, leaning back on the piled blankets, I gazed up at the pale-blue clouds of it, rising beyond the firelight into a velvety darkness overhead. But I really felt that I had always lived thus, shut off by stone walls from the mountains and the night, ringed around by

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

meat, and, since several hours might pass before the sheep or kid had been killed and made ready, it was often past midnight before we had eaten.

While the meal was cooking we variously slept or talked and let the bodyguards dry damp clothes by the fire or massage our weary limbs. Sometimes, to beguile the time, one of the company would recite from the long epic poems in which the Albanians record the exploits of their heroes. They were weird, monotonous laments, sung in a high-pitched nasal voice to the accompaniment of a one-stringed mandolin. An hour or so before the meal was served flasks of *raki* would be brought, accompanied by *mese* of onions, cheese, and sometimes hard-boiled eggs or lumps of grilled meat. *Raki* is a fiery, colourless spirit, made from the pulp of grapes, or sometimes, like *slivovitz*, from plums. Among the mountaineers it was usually home-brewed, and varied greatly in quality and strength. The principal guests would each receive a small flask, the shape of an old-fashioned burgundy flagon, and holding perhaps half a pint, while the rest of the company fared according to the resources of the host, sharing a flask between two or three. Toasts were drunk to the traditional greeting of " *Tungjatjeta* " — " May your life be prolonged " ; and, though the mountaineers habitually drank to excess, they seldom failed to comport themselves with grave, if sometimes mellowed, dignity.

When the cooking was done Maclean, as the chief guest, would be asked if the meal might be served ; there was never conversation after meals, and so the greatest compliment which he could pay his host and fellows was to ask for a postponement. As soon, however, as he had given his assent, a circular wooden table some five feet in diameter would be carried in, standing about six inches from the ground. Round this a dozen of us would assemble, sitting cross-legged, but in a crocodile, each sideways on to the table so as to make room for as many as possible. We would then each be given a spoon as our sole piece of cutlery and with this helped ourselves to the more liquid dishes at the centre of the table. There were no plates, so that each spoon plied steadily backwards and forwards

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

*669 [361] valley between Mount Daiti and Mount Bastar. The position was naturally strong and enjoyed a commanding view of the surrounding country. Despite the rain a guard of honour had been turned out to receive us; and we were welcomed by Colonel Yahya Chachi, the Commandant of the Zogist Headquarters, and his staff. This was composed of three former majors of gendarmerie and a former major and a captain of infantry, who all greeted us with the customary Zogist salute, swinging the right arm smartly across the chest. They entertained us royally, providing us with knives and forks which [273] we had almost forgotten how to use, and plying us in quick succession with potent *raki* and good Italian wine. We drank a health to the monarchs of England and Albania — the greatest and the smallest kingdoms in the world — and then toasted each other with appropriate speeches and excessive frequency. This drinking of toasts was to be the cause of some mirth; for Colonel Yahya Chachi suffered from a pronounced squint, and every time he raised his glass to propose a health at the crowded table, two persons invariably replied, each arrested alike by the gaze of his penetrating but divergent eyes. The Zogist staff were friendly disposed, but strangers to Central Albania, and, it seemed to us, demoralised by prolonged inactivity. Their real function indeed was to impress the tribes with Abas Kupi's power, and, if it came to fighting, to man the movement's mortars and heavy machine-guns.

When we had lunched we were taken out in a body to inspect the *cheta* responsible for the defence of the Headquarters.† It consisted of a hundred and fifty ragged men and boys, variously armed with rifles of German, Italian, Austrian, Serbian and Turkish pattern. They were drawn up in two ranks, each of which was dressed with as much precision as the undulations of the ground and the individualism of the guerillas would allow. We passed them rapidly in inspection and were then led to a low eminence where the staff officers assumed appropriately martial attitudes while Colonel Yahya harangued 000 the troops. Maclean was invited to reply; and when he had finished speaking the men placed their rifles between their knees and signified their approbation by loud and prolonged

† [i.e. at Shupal, Seat of permanent Zogist Headquarters -- Analyst]

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

*669 position by publicly rebuking Ramadan for his collaboration with the enemy. Our intervention, however, was resented; for, though there was no love lost between the two men, each regarded the other's policy as a reinsurance against his own miscalculations. Both indeed regarded the unity and prestige of the clan as their first interest, and one which was served, rather than threatened, by the simultaneous pursuit of their apparently contradictory policies.

We stayed only twenty-four hours with Aziz Dino Hoja; and next evening, as soon as it was dark, Maclean and Riddle set out across the Drin to keep a rendezvous with Ramadan Kalloshi, one of the strongest chiefs in Dibra. I stayed behind, however, to meet Aqif Llesh, who had sent word that he would come that night. Aqif was a stubborn old opponent of King Zog, and had spent fifteen years of exile in Yugoslavia, where I had once met him in 1940. After the German offensive in the Balkans, Aqif had taken to the mountains, where he had remained until the collapse of Italy. He had then sought to take advantage of the general amnesty, but his homecoming had been short-lived, for Fikri Dine was his blood enemy and had burnt down his house and carried off his flocks. Aqif's connections with Yugoslavia had naturally inclined him to the L.N.C., and his nephew, Haji, had already received an important command from Enver Hoja. To get even with Fikri Dine he had now openly declared for the Partisans, and was, besides, believed to be in touch with Tito's men in Macedonia.

The grizzled old warrior reached the house about ten o'clock with a bodyguard of thirty men, some of whom were left to stand sentry outside the gate. He was dressed in blue breeches and a leather coat and cap, and the stubble of his beard grew white on his kindly, weather-beaten face. He had marched all day and must have been tired, but refused both [273] *raki* and coffee. In his time he had been a heavy drinker, but now he affected the puritanism of the Partisans. He talked in voluble and rapid Serb, and, after a detailed explanation of his experiences and opinions, spoke of the importance of persuading the Gheg chiefs to take up arms again against the

273 Catholics in country fit
for grape-growing, make a potent red wine, which they resinate in Homeric fashion.

The Moslems, prohibited by the Koran from wine drinking, content themselves with distilled liquors. In every neighborhood one or more Moslem families will own a copper still, complete with boiler and cooling screw, which someone once bought in Scutari or another town. Neighbors borrow these stills from time to time, as American families borrow each other's ice-cream freezers. Much of the *raki*, or raisin brandy, so produced, is home distilled, but a certain amount is carried up from the towns. Green *mastica*, a vicious local variety of absinthe, is imported only.
276 Both Catholics and Moslems smoke. While a few Moslems own *narghilehs*, most tobacco addicts smoke cigarettes. The economics of cigarette smoking is that as a rule each man grows his own tobacco, and sells what he does not consume. He has to buy cigarette paper, imported from France. He has to have some kind of a lighting device, which usually runs to expense, as previously explained (see p. 13). The social aspect of smoking is that it forms a ready means of polite interaction, for men give each other cigarettes, rolling and licking them for an honored guest.

[262] 252 Since the principal food of all the mountaineers, whatever their religion, is bread, usually a tough, unleavened cornbread which will keep for weeks and grow harder and harder instead of molding, one of their principal needs is some way to grind the grain. Most houses contain mortars and pestles, and many also contain hand querns, of Roman design, which the women operate. It is probable, but not certain, that all of the millstones come from the market, since suitable stone is found in few
402 252 areas. A large part of the grain-milling, however, is done in small, water-driven mills, of which there are many. These mills, homemade except for the stones, are operated by vertical-shaft paddle wheels which are in effect primitive turbines. They save the expenditure of human muscular energy, and much time. In one place in Malsia e Jakovës, I saw another kind of mill, a pounding device which consisted of a trough-shaped log set on a pivot, and equipped with a heavy hammer at one end. Water flowed into this trough until enough had entered the lower end to tip the whole,

[See cat 116 p.13b --Analyst]
-17b-

795 182 Despite its centuries in Ghegnia, Catholicism has failed to change many of the customs of the mountaineers, such as the *fis* system with cross-cousin marriage, trial marriage, the levirate, blood brotherhood, and the swearing of virginity. The reason is of course that the needs which these customs fill have not been eliminated. The Moslem faith permits them and thus has become more popular. Islam is deemed the more fashionable and more civilized religion. The people of the towns, rich men, army officers, and other sophisticates are usually Moslems. Most Catholics are poor. This attitude is of course a hold-over from the period of Turkish domination. Many Albanians admired the Turks. Many spoke Turkish by preference. I recall once riding along a lane in Zadrima with my interpreter, Mr. Frasheri, who reprimanded 2 old harvesters whom we passed for talking Turkish together. Bishop Fan Noli suggests that they may have been Turkish-speaking refugees from the towns of Prizren, Peia, or Podgoritza.

[191]

795 262 273 There is a certain dietary difference between Catholics and Moslems. The former eat pork, especially in the wintertime. The Moslems curl up their nostrils and gag at the smell of pork, and will not enter a room where it is cooking. In its place they use much mutton fat in their cooking. Catholics drink wine when they can get it; Moslems care for their alcoholic needs with *raki*. These differences are probably of no biological importance, as far as the growth and development of the individual are concerned, but they do serve to intensify the mutual antipathy of the 2 religious groups and inhibit a genetic interchange.

582 178 795 In Lura, in a population not exceeding a few hundred individuals, Catholics and Moslems intermarry. In a single household the father may be Catholic, the mother Moslem, and the children will choose their own religions. This is the only place in Ghegnia where this happens. Lura is in process of change from Catholicism to Islam. As the latter gains ground, mixed households are found. The government of Ahmed Zog made much of this isolated situation, urging other Albanians to follow the example of the Lurans in the interests of national unity.

178 795 Various stages in this process of shifting are found in different tribes and *bairaks*. In Mer-

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

the master entered, all rose to their feet and remained standing until he was seated. If he was armed, one of them relieved him of his rifle, hung it on a peg by the door, and turned to see if he wanted to keep his side-arms or to have them hung up beside the rifle. As soon as he settled down he made himself a cup of coffee, rolled and lit a cigarette, and perhaps pulled a small bottle of raw spirit (*raki*) from his pocket. If in a gracious mood, he might make a cup of coffee for the older men and the master designate and let them smoke or even suck at his raki bottle, but if he wished he might lawfully reserve these joys for himself. In any event the younger men might neither drink nor smoke in his presence, though they could do both elsewhere. If he chose to make conversation, the others must follow his lead; if he preferred to remain silent, they could not speak—like good children they must remain seen but not heard. When supper came, no one might put his spoon into the common dish until he had done so. When the time came to leave the room, he led the way as he did when walking through the fields. In the house this indicated his pre-eminence; in the fields it was also a security measure. The others strung out behind him at specified intervals, on the assumption that he could deal himself with a frontal attack but needed to have his back protected by friends.

Given his duties, rights and privileges, the master soon acquired an air of command, whereas his subordinates, condemned for ever to show no initiative, shrank progressively into complete nonentities as their youthful qualities atrophied for want of exercise. But the master must not be tyrannical or unjust, spendthrift or careless of the general weal, and above all he must show no favouritism. If he developed such faults, the other men might lawfully depose him and elect another in his stead. However, the care taken initially in selecting him made such action extremely rare. A good master preferred the spirit to the letter of the law. For example, he rarely sold or bought any family possessions without first consulting his subordinates. And he was always careful not to destroy his subordinates' feeling that the farm and everybody and everything on it belonged to each of them individually as well as collectively, that the welfare of each of them concerned the whole family, and that the general welfare concerned each individual.[1]

[1] Thus a youth who obviously had nothing of his own was yet perfectly in order when he stated that he had just bought a field or even a bride for his brother.

10. Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

X. Decisions Taken on April 30th, 1905, by the Youth of Shalë.

(From Father Gjeçov, *Kanùn*, pp. 126–7.)

1. As from to-day up to Ash Wednesday the percentage on loans at interest is to be paid with 25 okes of grain. If this is not paid by Ash Wednesday, a percentage of 30 okes is to be taken by force from the debtor.

As interest 100 grosh or 100 okes of grain as the creditor wishes are to be paid. Let him take 100 grosh if it suits him, or if he says, 'I'll have grain', let them give him 100 okes of grain.

2. Grain is never to be given to anybody by a man of Shalë unless it is wanted for a funeral meal or it is desired to make a present of not more than 20 okes.

3. Raki is never to be produced by a man of Shalë at a funeral meal except during the seven weeks of Lent.

4. No man of Shalë is ever to give away more than 100 grosh either outside or inside the tribe.

A godmother is not to present a red *xhamadam* (sleeveless jacket).

No woman is to go to a wedding in a party of five or more and they are not to seek a woman outside the same house.[1]

5. Whoever fires the first shot in the yard of a church or inside its boundaries is to have his house burned and must pay 20 purses under the guarantee of flock-cum-shepherd and the youth of Shalë.

6. If a man disturbs a mass that is being said and if the priest, crucifix in hand, says, 'So-and-so has troubled me', the offender will have his house burned and must pay a fine of 2 oxen to the tribe.

7. Whoever touches Church property must pay a fine of 2 oxen to the tribe.

8. Whoever molests the Church servant must pay a fine of 2 oxen to the tribe.

9. If anyone borrows coffee and sugar from the priest for a funeral meal and does not return them to him within four weeks, and if the priest complains, he must pay a fine of one ox to the tribe.

10. Whoever steals an ewe, goat and cow from a man of Shalë and whoever does anything to his neighbour that disgraces him, shall have his harvest burned, his fields plucked bare and his grain panniers smashed. He will pay fines of one ox to the youth and 2 rams to the government representative.

11. These laws, enacted by the youth of Shalë together with the

[1] The last clause of § 4 is given as in Mrs Hasluck's MS., but there seems to be some mistake, as the corresponding passage in the Italian version of Father Gjeçov's *Kanùn* runs:

Lo shalano non può fare il compare più di 5 volte, e non può chiedere che si leghino in comparto più di 5 famiglie.

2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
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In the Restaurant

"Good! Good! Dobro! Good!" Then he patted me kindly on the back. I could sometimes wish that all critics were as easily pleased.

With the exception of breakfast, which in mid-Albania is either a non-existent meal, or consists of a cup of Turkish coffee and nothing else, I got my food at a little restaurant[1] in the bazaar. Here, as at the inn, my demands were wont to cause astonishment. They could never understand my liking for maize bread, which is despised by them as the food of the poor, and, unless I made a fuss, always provided me with the stodgy imitation of French bread which they considered more suitable for a person of my exalted status. And when I asked for yaghourt, as I frequently did, the cook felt, I think, much as the head waiter of the Carlton would if one of the diners were to send him out for a penn'orth of fish and chips. Otherwise the food was what one usually finds in such places—all kinds of curious odds and ends of meat, partly roasted and partly stewed, oily beans, stuffed cucumbers, pilaf of rice, and sometimes macaroni. Now and then there would be caramel pudding, smothered in honey and much too sweet. The restaurant was open to the street, and, as it consisted of one room only, both cooking and washing-up went on in full view of the diners. The various dishes simmered all day over a slow charcoal fire, and there was no difference between dinner at midday and supper at night. The best drink was bottled beer from Trieste at three krone (1s. 3d.) the bottle, the wine, like all Albanian wine, being poor stuff. I usually found it necessary

[1] [in Elbasan -- Analyst] 245